

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 HEW-04 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 L-03 USIA-06 OES-06

/065 W

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R 061122Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4750

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LAGOS 5277

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, ELAB, TBIO, ALLOW, NI

SUBJECT: WORK-TO-RULE BY DOCTORS

REF: LAGOS A-39

SUMMARY: CHRONICALLY OVERBURDENED, UNDERSTAFFED AND INEFFICIENT HEALTH SERVICES IN NIGERIA ARE THREATENED WITH BREAKDOWN BY DOCTORS'S DEMAND FOR FIVE-DAY WEEK. DOCTORS'S GRIEVANCES INCLUDE BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE, LACK OF FACILITIES AND GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO DEAL WITH POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS SANITATION PROBLEMS OF LAGOS. END SUMMARY.

1. HEALTH SERVICES IN NIGERIA ARE IN DANGER OF GRINDING TO

HALT FOLLOWING DECISION OF DOCTORS IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS TO

WORK NO MORE THAN FIVE-DAY, 40 HOUR WEEK NOW STANDARD FOR CIVIL SERVANTS (REFAIR). DOCTORS ARE STAYING AWAY FROM GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS FROM 3:30 P.M. TO 7:30 A.M. WEEKDAYS AND ALL DAY SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS. NURSES ARE FORCED TO MAINTAIN SERVICES DURING THOSE HOURS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON THEIR OWN. LAGOS UNIVERSITY TEACHING HOSPITAL HAS CLOSED ITS ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AND CURTAILED OTHER OPERATIONS. (PRIVATE HOSPITALS ARE

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UNAFFECTED BY WORK-TO-RULE.)

2. DOCTORS AGREED TO MEET WITH REPRESENTATIVEEEEOF LAGOS STATE MINISTRY OF HEALTH TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR OVERLAPPING HOURS ON DUTY, BUT WERE ANGERED BY ATTITUDE OF MINISTRY WHICH SUMMONED THEM FOR MEETING APRIL 28 WITHOUT GIVING WHAT THEY CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT NOTICE. FEDERAL COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH ALHAJI (COMMISSIONER OF POLICE) KAFARU TINUBU AND PERMANENT SECRETARY S.A. MUSA WENT TO GENEVA TO ATTEND WHO MEETING IN SPITE OF CRISIS, BUT HAVE NOW RUSHED BACK TO LAGOS TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH DOCTORS.

3. DOCTORS'DISCONTENT CAME TO HEAD APRIL 22-23 AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF NIGERIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION. IN SPEECH TO DELEGATES, ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT EKPO EYO GAVE DEVASTATINGLY FRANK WRAPUP OF DETERIORATION IN NIGERIAN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM AND IMPENDING HEALTH DISASTER IF URBAN SRNITATION CONDITIONS WORSEN. GIST OF EYO'S REMARKS: DOCTORS ARE FED UP WITH BUREAUCRACY, LACK OF DRUGS, EQUIPMENT AND SPACE. FACILITIES ARE NOT BEING IMPROVED OR EXPANDED; THEY ARE REGRESSING. THERE ARE NOW 10 QUALIFIED NIGERIAN SURGEONS FOR EVERY OPERATING ROOM. DOCTORS ARE ALSO DISCOURAGED BECAUSE LARGER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF URBAN AREAS ARE NOT BEING CONFRONTED. LAGOS SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM CONSISTS OF DUMPING WASTE INTO LAGOON, WHICH IS NOW HUGE SEPTIC TANK. (43 PERCENT OF LAGOS HOUSEHOLDS HAVE FLUSH TOILETS, BUT THEIR SEPTIC TANKS MUST BE PUMPED OUT AND CONTENTS EMPTIED -- ALSO INTO LAGOON -- RATHER REGULARLY.) EYO PROJECTED SEVERE WATER SHORTAGE IN LAGOS ARE IN NEAR FUTURE IF CRASH PROGRAM TO INCREASE SUPPLY IS NOT UNDERTAKEN. TRASH DISPOSAL IS GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE. LAGOS CITY COUNCIL HAS NOT ACQUIRED NEW GARBAGE TRUCKS TO KEEP UP WITH URBAN GROWTH, DOES NOT MAINTAIN THE ONES IT HAS. SIDEWALKS AND COMPOUNDS ARE FILLING UP WITH GARBAGE. BECAUSE OF GENERAL LACK OF SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT AND DECLINING MORALE AMONG DOCTORS, EYO SAID DOCTORS SHOULD DEMAND THAT GOVERNMENT -- WHICH HAS NO MORE CONSIDERATION FOR DOCTORS THAN FOR THE AVERAGE CIVIL SERVANT -- GIVE THE DOCTORS THE SAME BENEFITS AS CIVIL SERVANTS, INCLUDING FIVE DAY WORK WEEK. HE CALLED ON GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE NEW WAGE PLAN AND BEGIN TO FACE STAGGERING ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN LAGOS AREA.

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COMMENT: CLOSING EMERGENCY ROOMS DOES NOT EFFECT AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE AS MUCH AS WOULD APPEAR ON THE SURFACE. EMERGENCY ROOMS LACKED EQUIPMENT AND STAFF IN ANY CASE. IT WAS STANDARD PROCEDURE BEFORE CURRENT TROUBLES THAT NO BLOOD BANK TECHNICIANS WORKED IN HOSPITALS AFTER 3 P.M, THUS EFFECTIVELY PRECLUDING AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY OPERATIONS. BLOOD BANK TECHNICIANS, BEING CIVIL SERVANTS, WORK STANDARD CIVIL SERVANT HOURS, FOLLOWING ROUTINE THAT DOCTORS HAVE ADOPTED NOW.

PROGNOSIS IS THAT FMG WILL GIVE DOCTORS MORE MONEY AND THEY WILL
GO BACK TO WORK, BUT BASICALLY UNSATISFACTORY HEALTH CARE SITU-
ATION, SANITATION CRISIS, BUREAUCRATIC MESS WILL CONTINUE TO
WORSEN.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC HEALTH, MEDICAL DOCTORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LAGOS05277
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760176-0451
From: LAGOS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760585/aaaacujt.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 LAGOS A-39
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <23 SEP 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WORK-TO-RULE BY DOCTORS
TAGS: SWEL, ELAB, TBIO, ALOW, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006